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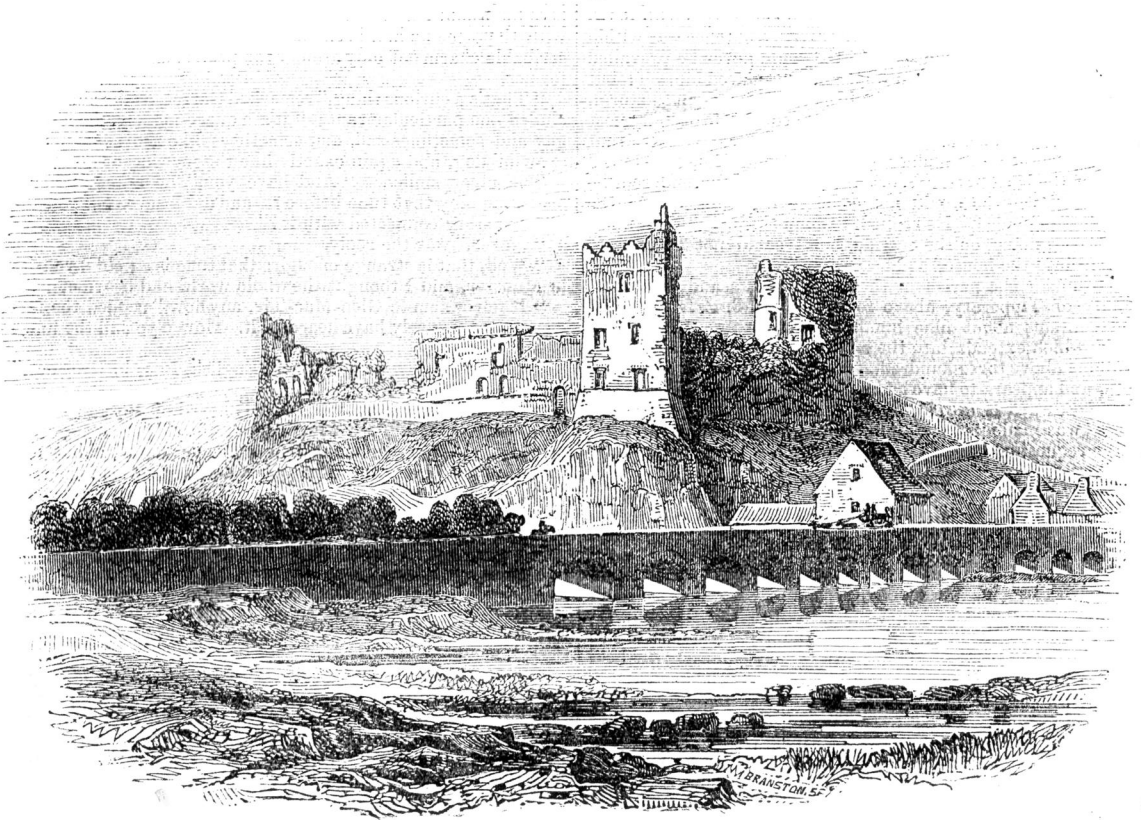
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VOLUME I.



ARDFINNAN CASTLE, COUNTY OF TIPPERARY.

IN some of the recent numbers of our Journal we presented our readers with views of two or three of the many striking objects of picturesque and historic interest for which, among our numerous beautiful rivers, the gentle Suir is more than ordinarily remarkable; and we return again with pleasure to its green pastoral banks, to notice another of its attractive features—the magnificent ruin of Ardfinnan Castle. This is a scene that must be familiar to many of our readers, for the traveller must have been a dull and unobserving one, who, journeying between Cork and Dublin by way of Cahir, has not had his attention roused by its romantic features, and an impression of its grandeur and picturesqueness made upon his memory, not easily to be effaced. Ardfinnan is indeed one of the very finest scenes of its kind to be found in Ireland, and is almost equally imposing from every point from which it can be viewed. The Castle crowns the summit of a lofty and precipitous rock, below and around which the Suir winds its way in graceful beauty, while its banks are connected by a long and level bridge of fourteen arches, which tradition states is of coeval erection with the fortress, and which, at all events, is of very great antiquity. On every side the most magnificent outlines of mountain scenery form the distant back-grounds; and every object which meets the eye is in perfect harmony with the general character of the scene.

Ardfinnan is a village of considerable antiquity, and derives its present name, which signifies Finnan's Height or Hill, from St Finnan the leper, a celebrated ecclesiastic who founded a church and monastery here in the seventh century, previously to which the place had borne the name of *Druim-abhrad*.

Of this religious establishment there are however no remains, as it was plundered and burnt by the English in 1179; and the present castle was erected on its site in 1183, by Prince John, then Earl of Morton, of whom it has been remarked that he achieved nothing during his stay of eight months in Ireland, but the construction of this and two other castles, namely, Lismore and Tiobrad Fachtna, now Tibraghny on the Suir, which he erected with a view to the conquest of Munster. From these castles he sent parties in various directions to plunder the country; but being met by the Irish under the command of Donall O'Brien, Dermot Mac Carthy, and Roderick O'Connor, they were defeated with great slaughter, four knights having been killed at Ardfinnan; after which John was glad to return to England.

Prince John, however, or those under whose advice he acted, showed a considerable degree of judgment and military skill in the selection of Ardfinnan as the site of a fortress, which commanded one of the chief passes into South Munster; and the castle itself was of a princely magnificence, and of such a degree of strength as must have rendered it impregnable before the use of artillery. Its general form, as its ruins still sufficiently show, was that of a parallelogram, strengthened by square towers at the corners, and having a strong entrance gateway. This gateway still remains, as well as the greater part of the walls; but the edifices of the interior are in a state of great dilapidation, and only part of the roof of one room remains. It is stated by the editor of Lewis's Topographical Dictionary, but on what authority we know not, that this castle belonged to the Knights Templars, and that

on the suppression of that establishment it was granted to the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, and subsequently to the Bishop of Waterford. But be this as it may, it was preserved as a military fortress till it was dismantled in 1649 by that great destroyer of Irish castles, Oliver Cromwell, who, planting his cannon on the opposite hill near the bridge, made a breach in the walls, which speedily induced the garrison to surrender. The breach there is still shown, and according to an old tourist the following story is told in connection with it:—"When the place was besieged by Oliver, a butcher was within the walls, who while the siege lasted could never be prevailed on to come out of the room where he had placed himself; but when the breach was made, and the soldiers began to storm, he took up a handspike, and defended the breach almost alone for some time, and knocked down several soldiers that strove to enter; but finding none to second him, he retired without the least hurt. When the castle was surrendered, he was asked why he would not come to the walls before the breach was made? He replied, 'Damn them, I did not mind what was doing on the outside, but I could not bear their coming into the house,' as he called it."

Ardinnan is a parish in the barony of Iffa and Offa west, county of Tipperary, above four miles S. S. E. from Cahir, and contains about nine hundred inhabitants. The village itself, which extends into the adjoining parish of Ballybacon, contains above three hundred. It was once a place of greater note, and appears to have had a corporation, as it is on record, 4th of Edward II (1311), that a grant of "pontage for three years" was made "to the Bailiffs and good men of Ardfynan" at the request of the Bishop of Limerick. P.

PUSS IN BROGUES,

A LEGEND.

It was about Christmas in the year 1831 that I received an invitation to spend the holidays with a friend who resided in a valley embosomed amongst the loftiest of those mountains which form the boundary between the King's and Queen's counties. The name of my host was Garret Dalton; he held a considerable tract of land at a low rent, and by hard working and thrifty living contrived not only to support his family in comparative comfort, but to "lay up a snug penny in the horn" for his only daughter Nanny, who was at this time about fourteen years of age, and, as her fond father often proudly boasted, "the pattrern or as purty a colleen as you'd find from the seven churches of Clonmacnoise to the hill or Howth—wherever that was."

Garret was generous and hospitable; his house "was known to all the vagrant train," and the way-worn pilgrim, the wandering minstrel, the itinerant "boccough," and the strolling vender of the news and gossip of the day, were always secure of a welcome reception at his comfortable fireside.

Amongst the most constant of his guests was one Maurice O'Sullivan, a native of the county of Cork. Maurice was a most venerable-looking personage—tall, gaunt, athletic, and stone blind. He was about eighty years of age; his white hair flowed on his shoulders, and he played the Irish bagpipes delightfully. He was the lineal descendant of a family still famous in the annals of the "green isle;" and although now compelled to wander through his native land in the garb and character of a blind piper, he had once seen better days, and was possessed of education and intelligence far superior to most of his caste. He was intimately acquainted with the sad history of his country, was devotedly attached to the dogmas of the fairy creed, could recite charms and interpret dreams, and was deeply conversant in all those witch legends and traditions for which the Munster peasantry are so peculiarly celebrated. Hence Maurice was always a special favourite with my enthusiastic friend, who regularly entertained him at his own table, and who, when they would have disposed of their plain but comfortable and substantial meal, would treat his blind guest to repeated "rounds" of good "half and half," composed of water from the spring, and the *potteen* of the valley. It was night-fall when I arrived, and the happy family, consisting of Garret and his wife, Nanny their eldest girl, and her two little brothers, with Paddy Bawn the "sarvint boy," and Ounty the "girl," including blind Maurice, were collected in a smiling group around the immense turf fire. In that day teetotalism had made little progress in Ireland; a huge copper kettle was therefore soon hissing on the fire; a large grey-beard of mountain-

dew stood on the huge oak-table; tumblers and glasses glittered in their respective places; and, in a few minutes we were all engaged in discussing the merits of a large jug of *potteen* punch. All were happy; Garret talked, his wife smiled; told all the "new news" of the Queen's county; whilst the spaces were filled up by blind Maurice, who played several of his most delightful national airs on his antique-looking pipes, whilst invariably as he concluded each successive lay, he would enrich the treat by some tradition connected with the piece he had been playing, and which threw an indescribable charm not only around the performance, but the performer.

"That's a curious thing," remarked Garret, as the piper concluded one particular rant; "it's a quare medley, sometimes gay and sometimes sad, and sometimes like the snarlin' of a growlin' dog, and again exactly like the mewling of a cat."

The piper smiled. "And have you," he asked, "never heard me play that tune before?—and did I never tell you the strange story connected with it?"

"Never," was the reply.

"Well, that is strange enough; that tune is an old favourite in Munster, and I thought the whole world had heard of it."

"It never kem to Glen-Mac-Tir, anyhow," replied the farmer, "or I'd surely have heard of it. How d'ye call the name of it?"

"*Caith-na-broqueen*—that is in English, Puss in Brogues," said the piper.

"Well," said Garret, "it's often I heard of Puss in Boots, but I never heard of Puss in Brogues afore."

"Well, I'll tell you and this good company all about it," said Maurice, laying down his pipes and wiping his forehead.

"Ay, but afore you begin," said Garret, "take another dhrop to wet your whistle, and you'll get on the betther with your story."

The piper seized the flowing tumbler again, and raising it to his lips, gaily exclaimed, whilst his attenuated hand shook nervously beneath the weight of the smoking goblet,

"*Sho-dhurilth*, your healths, my friends, glory to our noble selves; and if this be war, may we never have more peaceable times."

"Amen," was the fervent response of every one present.

"Now for the *Caith-na-broqueen*," said Garret.

"Ay, and a wild and strange tale it is," said Maurice. "However, it is a popular tradition in South Munster, and often when a boy have I listened to it, whilst my eyes, now dark for ever, would glisten with delight, and I would even fear to breathe the lest one syllable of the legend might escape me." Then emitting a deep-drawn sigh, and again wiping his polished brow, he thus began.

"At the foot of a hill in a lonely district of the county of Cork, about a dozen miles from my native village, there lived in old times a poor man named Larry Roche. He was, they say, descended from that family of the Roches once so mighty in the south of Ireland, and some branches of which still retain a considerable degree of their former consequence and respectability. Poor Larry, however, although the blood of kings might flow through his veins, was neither rich nor respectable; and his only means of support was a patch of barren land, which he held from that celebrated sportsman Squire B—, in consideration of his services as care-keeper of a vast extent of bog and heath, the property of the squire, and which extended far westward of poor Larry Roche's cabin. Yet Larry was not discontented with his situation. His father and grandfather had lived and died in the same cabin; and although sometimes he might feel disposed to envy the fine times which the sporting squire enjoyed, yet on cool reflection he would console himself with the consideration that "it was not every one that was born with a silver spoon in his mouth," and that even squire B— himself, as grand as he was, was on the "look down," or he would not spend so much of his time wading through fens and bogs at home, but like his ancestors be lavishing his thousands amongst the *Sassenaghs* at the other side of the lough, or driving about on the continent. Thus rolled away poor Larry's days in poverty and contentment. In the shooting season his time was occupied in following his master over heath and hillock with his game-bag on his shoulder, and his "dhudeen" in his teeth, whilst the rest of the year was spent in lounging about the ditches of the neighbourhood, chatting with the cronies of the vicinity about his family connexions, or the fairies of Glendharig, or squabbling with his good woman and his young ones: for Larry was married; and as his wife was exactly a counterpart of himself, every hour